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C O N F I D E N T I A L HANOI 000368

FOR EAP/MLS

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TAGS: PREL PGOV VM

SUBJECT: VIETNAM ON NORTH KOREA'S MISSILE LAUNCH

Classified By: Political Counselor Brian Aggeler. Reasons 1.4 (B/D)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: In an April 17 conversation with PolCouns, the MFA's DG for MFA International Organizations Director General, Le Hoai Trung, described Vietnam's efforts to urge the DPRK to "show restraint" and remain engaged in the Six-Party Talks. Prior to the April 5 missile launch, Vietnam's Deputy Prime Minister, Truong Vinh Trong, spoke with North Korea's Vice Minister of Trade, who was visiting Hanoi, to discourage the launch. Immediately following the launch, DG Trung called in DPRK Ambassador Ma Chol Su for what Trung described as a 90 minute "frank and candid" discussion. During the meeting, the North Koreans argued that escalation was their only response given U.S. "inaction" and the increasingly negative comments coming out of Seoul and Tokyo. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) MFA International Organizations Director General Le Hoai Trung spoke with PolCouns on April 17 about the GVN's response following North Korea's April 5 missile launch. DG Trung informed PolCouns that he had called in DPRK Ambassador Ma Chol Su after the launch and had a "frank and candid" discussion with him for 90 minutes. Trung commented that he had told the North Koreans that Vietnam could "relate" to the DPRK and that Vietnam's standing in the 1980's, with the international embargo and allegations of GVN use of Chemical Weapons in Cambodia, was very similar to the DPRK today. Trung encouraged the DPRK to show maximum restraint, to which the DPRK Ambassador responded that North Korea had no choice but to escalate the current situation given the rising hostility from the United States, South Korea and Japan.

¶3. (C) Trung said he pointed out to the DPRK Ambassador that the new administration in Washington seemed to be very conciliatory in trying to reach out to the regime. The Ambassador responded that North Korea's leaders are waiting for actions and not words from the United States and noted that while in Asia Secretary Clinton had publicly criticized the DPRK. The Ambassador asserted that they had long ago told the United States of North Korea's intention to launch a satellite, including during a visit of Secretary Albright, and there had been no public outcry.

¶4. (C) The Ambassador also groused that the new Japanese government was ignoring an agreement the DPRK had made with the previous Japanese administration. This taken in conjunction with "hostile" comments coming from South Korea's President, convinced the DPRK that it had no choice but to escalate the situation, the Ambassador said. Trung said that he was told that North Korea's leaders have been particularly surprised by the recent tone coming from Seoul, which to them sounded very similar to statements from Japan.

¶5. (C) Trung noted that China and Russia do not support the North Korean regime but also do not want a failed state on their borders. He said that all members of the Six-Party

Talks must show restraint. As Asia's "regional representatives" on the UNSC, Japan and Vietnam in particular need to act in a responsible and cautious manner since the DPRK does not always act rationally, Trung said. Trung added that Japan needed to be particularly careful in its current actions since it is still seeking to join the UNSC as a permanent member.

¶ 6. (C) Trung lamented that he didn't know what other measures could be taken to get the DPRK to act more responsibly. "What else can we do?" he asked PolCouns. He relayed that shortly before the missile launch, the DPRK Vice Minister of Trade was in Hanoi and that the First Deputy Prime Minister, Truong Vinh Trong, met with him to voice concern regarding the upcoming launch and urged the North Koreans to show restraint. DG Trung noted that the GVN would never publically shame the DPRK but said that GVN's top leadership remains concerned about the situation.

¶ 7. (C) As an aside to show the backward nature of the DPRK, Trung relayed how previously when the Foreign Minister of North Korea visited Vietnam last summer he walked into a meeting room where members of the DPRK delegation were preparing for a meeting with their Vietnamese counterparts. One of the North Koreans had tears running down his face and DG Trung asked if everything was ok. The North Korean motioned to a bowl of fruit on the table and responded that his children had never tasted either apples or oranges.

MICHALAK